

BOOK REVIEW

KEVIN ADAMS and MARTY CASSTEVENS. 1996. **Wildflowers of the Southern Appalachians: How to Photograph and Identify Them.** (ISBN 0-89587-143-2, pbk.). John F. Blair Publisher, 1406 Plaza Drive, Winston-salem, NC 27103 (910-768-1374; 910-768-9194 fax). \$26.95. 257 pp. Color photos.

You can find field guides that are less expensive, more compact, and include more species, but this book has several features that make it well worth the money. First, it is the most comprehensive guide to herbaceous wildflowers of this specific geographic region. The southern Appalachians—sometimes called the botanical jewel of the eastern United States, with over 2500 species of flowering plants—includes sections of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia. However, since many of the 180 species in this book have wide geographic distributions, the book has application far beyond these states.

A second important feature of the book is the high quality of the photographs, along with hints on how to photograph wildflowers. The photos are striking because they have exceptional focus contrast to separate the flowers from their backgrounds, a feat the authors usually accomplished with a 75-300 mm zoom lens with an attached close-up lens. The 28-page chapter on "Photographing Wildflowers" has 23 photos of flowers (copies taken from the main section of the book) that demonstrate the excellent results that can be obtained with the equipment and techniques described. This chapter would be much improved if it also included photographs of the equipment items themselves (or the authors using the equipment), since many amateur photographers may not be familiar with such items as a Bogen super clamp, Bogen accessory side arm, ball head, focusing rail, or wind barrier. The ten-page chapter on "Format" includes an additional seven pages of "Photo Tips" and "Wildflower Photography Categories," which correspond to the useful photo tips adjacent to each flower photo.

A third important feature is the emphasis on conservation. The authors strive to educate the public about wildflowers, in the belief that "education is the best environmental policy." The book promotes environmental stewardship in the introductory chapter, and in the chapters on "The Natural Setting," "Botanical Exploration of the Southern Appalachians," and "Environmental Concerns."

The authors encourage people to photograph rare flowers, rather than pick them. Their photographic tips include ways to minimize disturbance to flowers and their habitats, and warn that sometimes flowers should not even be photographed if intrusion into the habitat is too damaging.—*Jerry Carpenter, Northern Kentucky University.*